



Organizing Town Hall Meetings to Counter Stigma and Discrimination: Gaining Consensus and Obtaining Opinions

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www.adscenter.org





ADS Center
1211 Chestnut Street
11th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107
1-800-540-0320
info@adscenter.org
www.adscenter.org

(Moderator for this call is Shannon Flanagan.)





Speakers

- **Sarah Armstrong**, Mosaic Company
- **Iris Carroll**, Programs for People
- **Latonya Slack**, California Black Women's Health Project



Benefits of Town Hall Meetings

1. Live, targeted audience

- Database of contacts

2. Free-flowing exchange of ideas

3. Brings topic to forefront

4. Collective research can be utilized for future efforts

5. Feedback can support, or nullify, current campaigns

6. Broadcast can bring issue to hundreds of people

- Through media relations or partnerships

Types of Town Hall Meetings

Goal of meeting determines format, venue and speakers

Do you want to shock the audience into attending, or lure them in with something else?

Do you want to hear opinion – or change it?

Are people “stepping up to the mike” or are you telling them what you think?

Is the event at a known location (Chamber of Commerce) or an unknown location?

Are speakers experts or community leaders?

Creating Success/Call to Action

Success could be media attention, and not necessarily a direct change in public opinion

Follow-up crucial
(Pre- and/or post-survey)

Identifying Call to Action
(Sharing information – changing policy)

PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE

Non-profit Framingham, Mass., agency that serves people recovering from a mental illness. It provides day treatment and employment services.

PFP Town Hall Meeting - Organizing

Dispelling the Stigma of Mental Illness

- 25th Anniversary Celebration

“We didn’t look at this as the end of 25 years, but the beginning of an impassioned effort to do more.”

PFP Town Hall Meeting - Goals

- **Increase community awareness of problem of stigma**
- **Provide opportunity for dialogue about mental illness and stigma**
- **Facilitate change in attitudes and behaviors**

PFP Town Hall Meeting - Planning

- **Delegated responsibility and covering costs**
- **Defined concept and goals**
- **Received advice**
- **Acquired donations from local corporations**

PFP Town Hall Meeting – Planning (2)

- **Determined format, location, date and time**
- **Publicity and invitations**
- **Selected panelists, moderator and keynote speaker**
 - Member of press moderated; expert in stigma was keynote; school, police, industry and political leaders sat on panel

PFP Town Hall Meeting – Format

- **Pre-forum reception with food, displays and informational handouts**
- **Provide inviting atmosphere before discussion**
- **Introduction**
- **Keynote speech**
- **Interactive dialogues with the audience**
- **Closing, with summary ideas from the audience**

PFP Town Hall Meeting – Success

In attendance were

- Federal and state officials;
- more than 200 mental health policy makers, researchers, consumers, advocates and family members

CALIFORNIA BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH PROJECT

- **Mission to improve the health and well-being of Black women and girls in California**
- **Founded in 1994 as a chapter of the National Black Women's Health Project**
- **Created a community-based resource center in South Central Los Angeles**
 - *Serving low-income women with family planning services, nutrition and fitness classes, health education workshops*

BWHP – Background

1998-99 Organization Assessment, need to

- influence policy
- increase advocacy skills among membership
- increase influence with stakeholders statewide

2000-01 Identifying Areas of Importance

- statewide survey with 1,300 women
- focus groups with 100
- Sacramento, Bay Area, Los Angeles, Inland Empire (a region of Southern California), San Diego
- results: reproductive health, violence, race/racism and mental health
- published study

BWHP – Background (2)

Policy Advocacy Program

multi-layered approaches to impact policy: idea is to influence policymakers, providers and the community while empowering the community to advocate for themselves

- Newsletters
- Issue Guides
- Policy Advisory Group meetings
- ✓Town Halls

BWHP Town Hall Meeting – Overview

- **Four every year**
- **Issue-oriented – local concerns**
- **Combine mental health issues with physical health concerns**
- **Partner with local community groups**
- **Co-sponsor with legislators**
- **Community leader or representative**

BWHP Town Hall Meeting – Logistics

- **Community center or familiar place**
(Mall vs. YWCA)
- **Available, easy access parking**
- **Two hours**
- **Thurs. evenings/ Sat. mornings**
- **Snacks**
- **Supplemental information/materials**
- **Press**

BWHP Town Hall Meeting – Success

- **Average 50 people at each meeting**
- **Objectives clearly stated and understood**
- **Open-ended evaluation, rating effectiveness:**

"Very beneficial. I think it's great that Black women's mental & emotional needs are now being addressed."

"It was good to learn what's being done and what I can do."

"Great Work! I'm ready to take action. Very inspirational."

QUESTIONS?

At the end of the speaker presentations you will be able to ask questions. You may submit your question by pressing 01 on your telephone keypad. You will enter a queue and be allowed to ask your question in the order in which it is received. On hearing the conference operator announce your name you may proceed with your question.



The following speakers can be contacted directly for more information:

Sarah Armstrong

sarah.armstrong@mosaiccompany.com

Iris Carroll

programsforpeople@hotmail.com

Latonya Slack

latonya@cabwhp.org, <http://www.cabwhp.org/>

www.adscenter.org

